

Heart of the Neighborhood



Prior to the development of our plan, I was unsure of the vitality of our neighborhood's pulse. After going through the planning process, I am now certain that this community's "heart" beats strong and that life-giving ideas and efforts pulsate throughout her streets. One can already begin to see the revitalization of our housing stock and the economic development within our area appears bright and promising. The plan's vision has injected a new hope and new life into the community, assuring vibrant and thriving neighborhoods for generations to come. — Fred Chavez, Alta Vista NA President

Introduction

This chapter of the Midtown Neighborhoods Plan focuses on the neighborhoods' goals, objectives and action steps for building on the strength of the planning area's historic character to revitalize local commercial centers and encourage the rehabilitation, restoration and maintenance of the area's housing.

The goals, objectives, action steps, timelines, lead partners, proposed partnerships and proposed funding sources were developed by Work Group members who were assisted by city staff and other agency representatives (see Appendix C).

Lead Partners are groups who have volunteered to begin the work of developing the partnerships necessary to implement the action steps. The Lead Partners will serve as coordinators to bring together all of the groups needed to achieve the proposed action. An initial listing of these groups is included under the proposed partnerships. The community also identified potential funding sources for their action steps. The community could approach these funding sources once the work of coordination is complete.

Goal 1: Economic Development

Revitalize and enhance the neighborhoods' historic commercial centers.

Objective 1.1: Historic Character

Preserve the historic character of the neighborhood commercial centers along Blanco, Fredericksburg, Hildebrand, Flores, and San Pedro.

Action Steps:

1.1.1 Identify the condition and significant building characteristics of all commercial structures in the plan area.

- Timeline: Short (during plan development)
- Lead Partners: Alta Vista NA, Beacon Hill NA, MidTown on Blanco, COSA Planning Dept.
- Proposed Partnerships: City Volunteer Corp, City Public Service, Harlandale High School, San Antonio College
- Proposed Funding Sources: Volunteer labor

1.1.2 Participate in the Unified Development Code (UDC) revision process to ensure that the type of development desired in the commercial centers is allowed and encouraged. Specifically, UDC provisions should allow for mixed-use development, lower parking requirements, shorter setbacks, live/work units, appropriate signage, and zoning which respects the era of the building.

- Timeline: Short (March – December 2000)
- Lead Partners: MidTown on Blanco, Alta Vista NA, Beacon Hill NA
- Proposed Partnerships: COSA Planning Dept.
- Proposed Funding Sources: No cost

1.1.3 Undertake a historical and architectural survey of the neighborhoods' commercial centers.

- Timeline: Short (1 – 2 years)
- Lead Partners: Alta Vista NA, Beacon Hill NA, new Merchants' Assn(s)
- Proposed Partnerships: SA Conservation Society, COSA Planning Dept. Historic Div.
- Proposed Funding Sources: SA Conservation Society grants, TX Historical Commission grants, fundraisers



Volunteers assisting with a survey of housing and commercial structural conditions and architectural features (see Appendix I).

Midtown Neighborhoods Plan

1.1.4 Identify and implement overlay zoning options (base zoning will remain the same), such as historic or conservation districts, that will help preserve and protect the older commercial buildings and enhance the pedestrian-scale environment characteristic of the neighborhood's commercial centers.

- Pedestrian-scale environment elements the community is interested in preserving and enhancing include but are not limited to: businesses located near the sidewalk with parking in the rear, canopies where appropriate, wide sidewalks, on-street parking and street landscaping.
- Either historic or conservation districts will include design guidelines.
 - Timeline: Short (1 – 2 years)
 - Lead Partners: Alta Vista NA, Beacon Hill NA, MidTown on Blanco, new Merchants' Assns
 - Proposed Partnerships: COSA Planning Dept.
 - Proposed Funding Sources: Minimal cost

1.1.5 Develop incentives to encourage compatible commercial building design. Encourage new construction to be compatible with the historic character of the neighborhood's commercial centers. Encourage good quality rehabilitation that is sensitive to a building's architectural characteristics.

- Recruit architects or other design professionals to assist area business owners in designing new construction or rehabilitation projects.
- Organize charrettes to further illustrate the business development potential of the area's commercial centers.
- Pursue the development of a façade improvement grant program.
 - Timeline: Mid (3 – 5 years)
 - Lead Partners: MidTown on Blanco, new Merchants' Assn(s), Alta Vista NA, Beacon Hill NA
 - Proposed Partnerships: Business Owners, Property Owners, COSA Cultural Affairs Dept.
 - Proposed Funding Sources: To be determined



Example of businesses on Blanco, illustrating the area's character



Example of a business on Blanco

Objective 1.2: Pedestrian Environment

Enhance the pedestrian environment in the area's commercial centers along Blanco, Fredericksburg, Hildebrand, Flores and San Pedro and ensure neighbors can walk or bike to area businesses by encouraging pedestrian-friendly sidewalks and streets, implementing traffic calming measures, and planting landscaping.

Action Steps: (also see Rebuilding Our Infrastructure Goal 1)

1.2.1 Apply to the COSA Public Works Department to request the burying of utility lines or relocation to alleys as a part of street improvement projects in the area's commercial centers (see application in Appendix E). Discuss these applications with the area's City Council person. The City's Utility Conversion Program, in association with City Public Service, evaluates, prioritizes and funds selected projects to convert overhead utility lines. Each project is individually evaluated against specific criteria.

- Timeline: Short (1 – 2 years)
- Lead Partners: MidTown on Blanco, Alta Vista NA, Beacon Hill NA, new Merchants' Assns.
- Proposed Partnerships: COSA Public Works
- Proposed Funding Sources: COSA

1.2.2 Encourage street trees and other landscaping in the area's commercial centers.

- Encourage landscaped buffers between commercial and residential uses. For example, encourage businesses that have parking behind their building to add a line of trees between the parking lot and the adjacent houses.
- Work to develop partnerships with businesses and neighborhood groups to ensure landscaping maintenance.
- Landscape and enhance the pocket parks along Fredericksburg Road as gathering spaces for customers and residents.
- Add benches, trees and a plaza (also see Community Places Action Step 1.1.6) in the MidTown on Blanco area.
- Consider planting hundreds of blooming trees to serve as a seasonal attraction.
- Ensure the safety of pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists by not planting landscaping in locations that could create visual obstructions or roadside hazards.
 - Timeline: Mid (3 – 5 years)
 - Lead Partners: MidTown on Blanco, Alta Vista NA, Beacon Hill NA, new Merchants' Assns.
 - Proposed Partnerships: Businesses, San



Example of an enhanced streetscape.



Illustration of street trees

Midtown Neighborhoods Plan

Antonio Trees, Individual Property Owners, Schools, adjacent NAs, Keep San Antonio Beautiful (KSAB), VIA, City Arborist, Bexar County Master Gardeners, Master Naturalists, COSA Planning Dept.

- Proposed Funding Sources: COSA Planning Dept. – Neighborhood Improvement Challenge Program, KSAB/VIA Tree Planting Program, Businesses

1.2.3 Actively work to paint out graffiti on buildings in the commercial centers and discourage vandalism by encouraging action by individual property owners as well as organizing clean up days and/or commercial area watches. Develop incentives for business owners to take preventative steps against graffiti such as grants for floodlights, shrubs to block walls or paint.

- Timeline: Short (Ongoing)
- Lead Partners: Alta Vista NA's Crime Watch Committee, Beacon Hill's Graffiti and COP Committees
- Proposed Partnerships: COSA Police Dept. SAFFE Officers, Youth Initiatives, Neighborhood Action Dept.
- Proposed Funding Sources: City's Paint Bank, Fundraisers

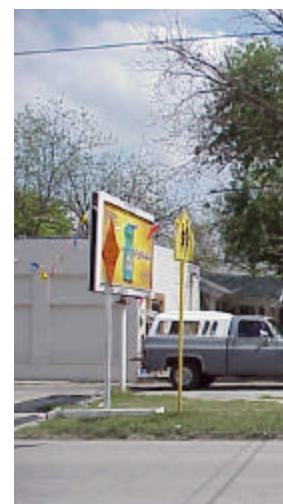
1.2.4 Reduce the amount of street clutter caused by advertising signage.

- Enforce existing signage ordinances, including regulations related to posting materials on telephone poles.
- Create more stringent restrictions for billboards and on-premise signs.
- Encourage appealing signage, including awning signage and appropriately sized signage posted on buildings (rather than pole signs).
- Remove advertising from bus benches.
- Request a sweep for illegal signage.
 - Timeline: Mid (3 – 5 years)
 - Lead Partners: Alta Vista NA, Beacon Hill NA, new Merchants' Assns.
 - Proposed Partnerships: COSA Code Compliance Dept., VIA
 - Proposed Funding Sources: Minimal cost

1.2.5 Encourage businesses to post clearly visible ad-



Examples of street clutter



Examples of street clutter

dress numbers.

- Create a business corridor identifier by developing a standardized, graphic format for address numbers in the Midtown area and other commercial centers.
 - Timeline: Short (1 – 2 years)
 - Lead Partners: MidTown on Blanco, Alta Vista NA, Beacon Hill NA, new Merchants' Assns.
 - Proposed Partnerships: Business owners, COSA Code Compliance
 - Proposed Funding Sources: Minimal cost

1.2.6 Improve street and business lighting in the commercial centers.

- Select street lighting that reflects the neighborhoods' character.
- Place lighting to reduce glare on adjacent residential uses.
 - Timeline: Long (6 or more years)
 - Lead Partners: MidTown on Blanco, new Merchants' Assns.
 - Proposed Partnerships: Business Owners, Lighting Companies, Alta Vista NA, Beacon Hill NA, City Public Service
 - Proposed Funding Sources: Business Owners

Objective 1.3: Business Development

Attract new neighborhood-friendly, locally owned, sustainable businesses that will meet the neighborhood's daily needs, build on our base of "mom and pop" businesses and bring new vitality to the neighborhood's commercial centers.

Action Steps:

1.3.1 Identify the planning area's existing businesses and vacant land available for business development. Collect and analyze data including building square footages, amount of parking, accessibility for disabled persons, and potential suitable uses given the businesses' size and building characteristics. Utilize the information collected by MidTown on Blanco and through the neighborhood survey of the entire planning area.

- Timeline: Short (1 – 2 years)
- Lead Partners: MidTown on Blanco, Alta Vista NA, Beacon Hill NA
- Proposed Partnerships: COSA Neighborhood Commercial Revitalization Program (NCR)



Neighborhood business



Neighborhood business

Midtown Neighborhoods Plan

- Proposed Funding Sources: Minimal cost

1.3.2 Conduct a market study of the plan area.

- The study should review market conditions (supply and demand), market segmentation, the competitive environment, shopping trends, consumer preferences and other economic factors. Once completed, publicize the market survey results to area businesses and potential developers or real estate professionals. The study planned for Summer 2000 will focus on the MidTown on Blanco area. Future studies may be needed for the other commercial centers in the planning area.
 - Timeline: Summer 2000
 - Lead Partners: MidTown on Blanco
 - Proposed Partnerships: COSA NCR
 - Proposed Funding Sources: COSA NCR

1.3.3 Encourage the business owners to organize.

- Target Fredericksburg Road merchants within the planning area for the development of a new NCR or Main Street commercial district improvement effort.
- Encourage business owners along the Fredericksburg, Hildebrand and San Pedro commercial corridors to organize new Merchants' Association(s).
- Provide business owners along the Fredericksburg, Hildebrand, and San Pedro commercial corridors with information on the benefits available through the City's Neighborhood Commercial Revitalization (NCR) Program. The NCR Program offers two types of support: 1) partnership projects and 2) revitalization projects. Partnership Projects help groups develop an organizational structure, a building inventory, and assess problems with city staff support. Each Partnership Project lasts about two years. Revitalization Projects include market research, planning, implementation and funding assistance.
- Continue to support business involvement in MidTown on Blanco (an NCR program).
 - Timeline: Short (1 – 2 years)
 - Lead Partners: COSA NCR
 - Proposed Partnerships: Businesses, Main Street Program, Alta Vista NA, Beacon Hill NA, COSA Planning Dept. – Historic Division
 - Proposed Funding Sources: COSA NCR

1.3.4 Increase communication and interaction between

Fredericksburg Road businesses

" The MidTown on Blanco Program has resulted in nearly \$500,000 in private reinvestment and 14 new businesses since 1998." — July 2000 MidTown Update Newsletter

Midtown Neighborhoods Plan

neighborhood residents, property owners, and business owners by holding joint meetings, social events and/or commercial corridor beautification efforts.

- Timeline: Short (Ongoing)
- Lead Partners: Alta Vista NA, Beacon Hill NA
- Proposed Partnerships: Business Owners, MidTown on Blanco, new Merchants' Assns., VIA, PTAs, Schools
- Proposed Funding Sources: Minimal cost

1.3.5. Encourage businesses to locate in identified neighborhood commercial centers along Blanco, Fredericksburg, Hildebrand, Flores, and San Pedro (see Land Use Plan). In addition to business development, encourage higher-density residential or live/work units to provide for a mix of uses in or near the area's commercial centers.

- Neighbors have expressed an interest in attracting: a grocery store, restaurants (possibly one in the former Gloworm location at North Flores and Ashby), additional shopping, daycare, family physicians, a bakery, a coffee shop, a hardware store, a fitness/exercise center, a deli, a bookstore, a movie theater, antique stores, specialty shops, a "corner" drug store with a soda fountain, an ice cream store and a fabric store.
- Site constraints, include parking, help determine whether a business is appropriate.
- Encourage major retailers to provide outlets that fit the scale of the neighborhood rather than typical pad sites.
 - Timeline: Short (Ongoing)
 - Lead Partners: MidTown on Blanco (for Blanco Road), Alta Vista NA, Beacon Hill NA, new Merchants' Assns.
 - Proposed Partnerships: Business Owners, Investors
 - Proposed Funding Sources: No cost

1.3.6 Increase awareness among local entrepreneurs about business assistance programs.

- Recruit the City's Economic Development Department (EDD) to do a "block walk" of area businesses. EDD walks a limited area to survey business owners' needs and to connect them with resources.
- Teach entrepreneurs about developing business plans, financial planning, loan qualification, clearing up and main-



Example of a mix of uses with an office on the corner and townhouses on the left



A mixed-use building with retail space on the first floor and an apartment above

Midtown Neighborhoods Plan

taining credit, how to utilize banks for cash flow, and other business issues, possibly using a model similar to existing first time homebuyer education programs.

- Timeline: Mid (3 – 5 years)
- Lead Partners: COSA EDD
- Proposed Partnerships: MidTown on Blanco, new Merchants' Assns., Alta Vista NA, Beacon Hill NA, COSA NAD – NCR, UTSA Small Business Development Center, SCORE (Service Corps of Retired Executives)
- Proposed Funding Sources: Minimal cost

1.3.7 Identify incentives to stimulate the rehabilitation of commercial buildings in the plan area. Encourage businesses to improve their facades, open boarded-up storefronts, and find alternatives to unappealing security bars on windows.

- Investigate best practices from other cities.
- Target the incentives to vacant, boarded-up or abandoned buildings including: the Gloworm, buildings along North Flores, Woodlawn, and near the intersection of Fredericksburg Road and the railroad tracks.
- Encourage established businesses, such as the Blanco Café, to further improve the appearance of their buildings.
- Develop financial incentives such as tax credits to encourage commercial building rehabilitation.
 - Timeline: Mid (3 – 5 years)
 - Lead Partners: COSA NAD – NCR
 - Proposed Partnerships: Alta Vista NA, Beacon Hill NA, MidTown on Blanco, COSA, Fannie Mae, SA Conservation Society, Banks
 - Proposed Funding Sources: To be determined

1.3.8 Beautify and enhance vacant, boarded-up or abandoned commercial buildings during the process of identifying future tenants. For example, paint a mural on boarded-up windows.

- Timeline: Short (1 – 2 years)
- Lead Partners: Property Owners
- Proposed Partnerships: School's Art Depts., MidTown on Blanco, new Merchants' Assns., Alta Vista NA, Beacon Hill NA
- Proposed Funding Sources: COSA Planning Dept. – Neighborhood Improvement Challenge Program

1.3.9 Identify incentives for small business develop-



Fredericksburg Road Corridor

Midtown Neighborhoods Plan

ment such as:

- Forgivable or low cost loans for businesses that may not qualify for funding from a traditional bank, a nonprofit lender or a governmental lending institution, or
- Microenterprise revolving loan fund where a pool of funds could be used to guarantee loans that are perceived as "risky" by traditional lenders. SALDC (San Antonio Local Development Company) currently operates a micro loan program.
 - Timeline: Long (6 or more years)
 - Lead Partners: City Manager's Office through the Small Business Consortium
 - Proposed Partnerships: (SALDC) San Antonio Local Development Company, San Antonio Business Development Fund (SABDF), Accion Texas, MidTown on Blanco, UTSA Minority and Small Business Development Centers, new Merchants' Assns.
 - Proposed Funding Sources: To be determined

1.3.10 Investigate long-term funding sources for economic revitalization efforts. These sources could include: Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone, Public Improvement District, or a Municipal Management District.

- Timeline: Long (6 or more years)
- Lead Partners: Legislative Representatives, COSA
- Proposed Partnerships: MidTown on Blanco, new Merchants' Assns., Alta Vista NA, Beacon Hill NA
- Proposed Funding Sources: To be determined



1999 Classic Days



1999 Classic Days

Objective 1.4: Marketing

Promote area businesses and MidTown on Blanco to enhance neighborhood identity and increase the number of residents and visitors shopping at area stores.

Action Steps:

1.4.1 Organize events such as Classic Days or a local Antiques Road Show that highlight the area's local "mom and pop" businesses.

- Existing business assets include:
 - a local restaurant row (not chain restaurants) that brings people to the neighborhood and features Blanco Café, Casbeers, Chris Madrid's, and Egg Roll Express;

Midtown Neighborhoods Plan

- a variety of shopping/eating at nearby businesses – A'Hon Grill, Popo's, groceries, video stores, drug stores, laundromat, "artsy" shops, antiques stores, flower shops, Rainbow Bakery, Carrera's, auto parts store and businesses south of Fredericksburg Road;
- MidTown on Blanco,
- new business investment in the plan area; and
- an excellent, centralized location.
 - Timeline: Short (Ongoing)
 - Lead Partners: MidTown on Blanco, new Merchants' Assns.
 - Proposed Partnerships: Businesses, Schools, COSA, NAs, Churches, etc.
 - Proposed Funding Sources: Private donors, corporate sponsors, fundraisers

1.4.2. Recruit professional advice to help create "identifiers" for the area's commercial centers through public art, benches, trash cans, banners, logos, etc.

- Timeline: Mid (3 – 5 years)
- Lead Partners: MidTown on Blanco's Design Committee, new Merchants' Assns
- Proposed Partnerships: NAs, VIA, COSA Public Works Dept., Cultural Affairs and Planning
- Proposed Funding Sources: COSA Cultural Affairs Dept. , Planning Dept. – Neighborhood Improvement Challenge Program



Example of banners, distinctive street lighting and landscaping used as commercial center identifiers

Objective 1.5: Environment

Address environmental concerns.

Action Steps:

1.5.1 Report potential environmental problems that may exist in the planning area.

- Complete a Phase I analysis of the planning area.
- Investigate possible pollution from the iron works near Grant & Fredericksburg Road, possible contaminated soil along Comal, and possible pollution or chemicals in Martinez Creek along IH-10 that results in strange colors and foam.
 - Timeline: Mid (3 – 5 years)
 - Lead Partners: Alta Vista NA, Beacon Hill NA
 - Proposed Partnerships: TNRCC, COSA Fire Dept.
 - Proposed Funding Sources: Local/national grants



Goal 2: Housing

Preserve and revitalize the neighborhoods' unique mix of quality housing.

Objective 2.1 Education

Educate the community, both residents and San Antonio as a whole, about ways to enhance, protect and rehabilitate the neighborhoods' character.

Action Steps:

2.1.1 Educate the community about historic preservation.

- Develop a brochure/educational campaign related to historic preservation.
- Publish an informational "restoration guide."
 - Timeline: Short (6 months)
 - Lead Partners: Alta Vista NA, Beacon Hill NA, MidTown on Blanco
 - Proposed Partnerships: American Institute of Architects (AIA), Neighborhood Resource Center (NRC), SA Conservation Society, COSA Planning Dept. – Historic Div.
 - Proposed Funding Sources: SA Conservation Society, COSA Planning Dept. – Neighborhood Improvement Challenge Program

2.1.2 Learn about the financial incentives available to historically designated properties.

- Coordinate a meeting to learn more about existing tax abatement incentives for historically designated properties.
- Follow the development of the Incentive Tool Kit to learn more about proposals for additional tax abatement incentives for designating areas as historic districts and rehabilitating historically designated properties.
 - Timeline: Short (1 – 2 years)
 - Lead Partners: Alta Vista NA, Beacon Hill NA
 - Proposed Partnerships: City Manager's Office, COSA Planning Dept. – Historic Division
 - Proposed Funding Sources: No cost

2.1.3 Develop a neighborhood brochure to educate realtors, potential new residents and other investors about the community's unique assets.

- Use the brochure to address the perception versus the reality of crime in the planning area. The brochure also should



Neighbors participating in a community meeting.



A historic sketch of a Beacon Hill house

Midtown Neighborhoods Plan

include information about area schools and churches.

- Include information on the history of the development of bungalows as a building form, architectural features, building materials and their restoration potential.
- Hire a graphic designer to complete the brochure.
- Look to other cities for examples of restored bungalows including Pasadena, CA.
 - Timeline: Short (1 – 2 years)
 - Lead Partners: Alta Vista NA, Beacon Hill NA
 - Proposed Partnerships: UU Housing, Local Realtors
 - Proposed Funding Sources: Neighborhood fundraiser, Realtors, Mortgage Companies

2.1.4 Organize a Bungalow Tour to increase awareness of the restoration potential of the area's housing. Use the tour to showcase good restoration examples and spark people's imagination. The tour also can showcase good examples of xeriscaping.

- Timeline: Mid (3 – 5 years)
- Lead Partners: Alta Vista NA, Beacon Hill NA
- Proposed Partnerships: Neighbors, VIA, SA Conservation Society, COSA Planning Dept. – Historic Div., Local businesses (who sell restoration items), Local Realtors, COSA NAD, Master Gardeners, Master Naturalists, SAWS
- Proposed Funding Sources: Sponsors

2.1.5 Create a Central City Ambassadors Program.

- The Program is intended to educate realtors, mortgage bankers and appraisers about the housing available in the central city. The program is proposed to work similar to Leadership San Antonio where a limited number of people (in the case of the proposed Ambassadors Program, a limited number of realtors) are selected to participate each year. This action step is consistent with the CRAG 2000 Recommendations.
 - Timeline: Short (1 – 2 years)
 - Lead Partners: City Manager's Office
 - Proposed Partnerships: Alta Vista NA, Beacon Hill NA, Fannie Mae, Neighborhood Resource Center, COSA NAD
 - Proposed Funding Sources: Minimal costs

UU Housing Assistance Corporation did a survey of every 10th household in the Beacon Hill neighborhood in 1996 and 1997. We found that overwhelmingly (92%) of the homeowners wanted to continue to live here. They found the housing inexpensive (11%) and convenient to work (14%) or enjoyed the uniqueness of an inner-city area (12%). Thirty percent listed all of the above reasons. No wonder the neighbors have put together such an ambitious and productive plan to maintain and improve their neighborhood! They feel it is home. — June Kachtik, Executive Director of UU Housing Assistance Corporation

2.1.6 Invite rental unit tenants to participate in neighborhood activities to learn more about the neighborhood.

- Timeline: Short (Ongoing)
- Lead Partners: Alta Vista NA, Beacon Hill NA
- Proposed Partnerships: Tenants, Landlords
- Proposed Funding Sources: No cost

2.1.7 Develop ideas, examples or sketches that can illustrate for landlords aesthetically pleasing ways to provide screened off-street parking and accommodations for residents' garbage.

- Timeline: Short (Ongoing)
- Lead Partners: COSA
- Proposed Partnerships: COSA Planning Dept., AIA, Alta Vista NA, Beacon Hill NA
- Proposed Funding Sources: Minimal cost

2.1.8 Study the impact of tax increases.

- Use the study to determine how much property taxes are increasing and to look at the ratio of the increase in home value compared to the increase in property taxes. For example, an increase in home value of \$1,000s compared to an increase of taxes in the \$100s may be an acceptable tradeoff.
- Based on the information collected in the survey, identify ways to maintain the neighborhoods' diversity and minimize the tax impact on the elderly, long-time residents, the poorest residents and neighbors who have paid off their homes. Consider freezing taxes based on study results and existing programs.
- Identify initiatives undertaken in other cities to address neighborhood gentrification.
- Keep in mind that an increase in home value can increase personal worth. Neighbors can use this worth for home equity loans.
 - Timeline: Mid (3 – 5 years)
 - Lead Partners: COSA Planning Dept.
 - Proposed Partnerships: Alta Vista NA, Beacon Hill NA, UU Housing, COSA NAD, COSA Finance Dept., Bexar Appraisal District, Realtor's Assn.
 - Proposed Funding Sources: To be determined

Midtown Neighborhoods Plan

Objective 2.2: Housing Character

Maintain the historic character of the neighborhoods' housing while building on the increased demand for area homes to attract reinvestment by new families.

Action Steps:

2.2.1 Investigate historic and/or conservation districts (see Appendix F) to maintain the style and character of the area's housing.

- Coordinate a series of public meetings where neighbors learn about historic and conservation districts from Planning Department Historic Preservation Division staff, Texas Historical Commission staff and residents of local historic districts.
- Based on the results of the public meetings, initiate the designation process for historic and/or conservation districts.
- Either historic or conservation districts will include design guidelines or design standards.
- Character defining features include homes that provide for a parkway (greenspace between the curb and sidewalk), sidewalk, front yard, front porch, and backyard.
- The districts should build on the strengths of good, solid and affordable housing stock that has character and charm with architectural features largely intact.
 - Timeline: Short (1 – 2 years)
 - Lead Partners: Alta Vista NA, Beacon Hill NA, MidTown on Blanco
 - Proposed Partnerships: SA Conservation Society, COSA Planning Dept. – Historic Div.
 - Proposed Funding Sources: No cost

2.2.2 Undertake a historical and architectural survey of the neighborhoods' residential areas.

- Timeline: Short (1 – 2 years)
- Lead Partners: Alta Vista NA, Beacon Hill NA
- Proposed Partnerships: SA Conservation Society, COSA Planning Dept. Historic Div.
- Proposed Funding Sources: SA Conservation Society grants, TX Historical Commission grants, fundraisers

2.2.3 Encourage compatible infill housing development



Neighborhood house



Neighborhood house

Midtown Neighborhoods Plan

on vacant parcels in the planning area.

- Encourage future development to follow the example set by some new housing projects that were constructed in keeping with the area's architecture, including the San Antonio Housing Authority's (SAHA) College Park Apartments and UU Housing's single-family residence at 615 West Magnolia.
 - Timeline: Short (Ongoing)
 - Lead Partners: UU Housing
 - Proposed Partnerships: Alta Vista, Beacon Hill NAs
 - Proposed Funding Sources: Minimal cost

2.2.4 Encourage a housing project for the lot with an empty foundation on Mulberry.

- Timeline: Short (1 – 2 years)
- Lead Partners: UU Housing
- Proposed Partnerships: Alta Vista, Beacon Hill NAs
- Proposed Funding Sources: HOME funds

2.2.5 Contact legislators to express the neighborhoods' support for the Historic Homeownership Assistance Act (see Appendix G). The proposed tax credit would apply to existing residential landmarks and contributing residential structures in existing historic districts. This action step is consistent with the CRAG 2000 Recommendations.

- Timeline: Short (1 – 2 years)
- Lead Partners: Alta Vista NA, Beacon Hill NA
- Proposed Partnerships: SA Conservation Society, International Fire Fighters Union, SA Historic Districts, COSA, CMO
- Proposed Funding Sources: No cost

Objective 2.3: Home Improvement and Maintenance

Improve the condition, appearance and maintenance of the neighborhoods' housing and yards.

Action Steps:

2.3.1 Sponsor a neighborhood beautification award to recognize housing maintenance and/or rehabilitation work completed by area residents.

- Celebrate recent efforts to fix up and restore houses.
 - Timeline: Short (1 – 2 years)
 - Lead Partners: Alta Vista NA, Beacon Hill NA



Neighborhood houses

Midtown Neighborhoods Plan

- Proposed Partnerships: NCR, Keep San Antonio Beautiful (KSAB), Home Depot, Alamo Hardwoods, ACE Service Center
- Proposed Funding Sources: Corporate businesses

2.3.2 Encourage neighbors to post clearly visible house numbers. Investigate the possibility of including block numbers on street signs.

- Timeline: Short (Ongoing)
- Lead Partners: COSA Code Compliance Dept., Fire Dept., Police Dept.
- Proposed Partnerships: Alta Vista, Beacon Hill NAs
- Proposed Funding Sources: Minimal cost

2.3.3 Create a program to encourage residents to paint their homes.

- Study the potential of implementing programs from other cities in San Antonio. For example, BostonWorks uses CDBG money in “emerging” historic districts to provide grants for half of the home painting cost up to a maximum of grant amount of \$4,000.
 - Timeline: Short (Ongoing)
 - Lead Partners: Alta Vista NA, Beacon Hill NA
 - Proposed Partnerships: Home Depot, Sherwin Williams, Painter’s Union, Paint companies
 - Proposed Funding Sources: Corporate businesses



Neighborhood house

2.3.4 Enforce current yard parking ordinance and encourage alternative parking surfaces (i.e. crushed granite).

- Timeline: Short (Ongoing)
- Lead Partners: COSA Code Compliance Dept.
- Proposed Partnerships: Alta Vista, Beacon Hill NAs
- Proposed Funding Sources: No cost

2.3.5 Educate landlords about the potential for fixing up and selling their single-family rental properties to new homeowners.

- Timeline: Short (Ongoing)
- Lead Partners: Alta Vista NA, Beacon Hill NA
- Proposed Partnerships: Realtors, Developers, Current renters, Potential homeowners
- Proposed Funding Sources: No cost

2.3.6 Encourage landlords to improve maintenance of

Midtown Neighborhoods Plan



Neighborhood house

problem rental properties.

- Encourage owners of problem rental properties to apply to the Rental Rehabilitation Program (RRP). The RRP offers rental-property owners low-interest financing for up to 50% of the repair costs on a property with major structural damage to at least one major building component.
- Follow the development of the Incentive Tool Kit to learn more about proposals to provide tax abatement incentives for rental rehabilitation.
- Study the potential of implementing programs from other cities.
- Support efforts to create stiffer laws related to home repair. Consider the laws available in Baltimore.
- Support efforts to create stricter rules for enforcing code and zoning violations.
 - Timeline: Short (Ongoing)
 - Lead Partners: Alta Vista NA, Beacon Hill NA
 - Proposed Partnerships: COSA Neighborhood Action Dept., Code Compliance Dept.
 - Proposed Funding Sources: Minimal cost

2.3.7 Increase awareness about existing programs available to assist with home ownership and housing repair.

- Target area renters for participation in first time homebuyers programs (see Appendix H).
- Encourage residents to use the housing services available through UU Housing, a neighborhood nonprofit housing provider.
 - Timeline: Short (1 – 2 years)
 - Lead Partners: UU Housing
 - Proposed Partnerships: Alta Vista NA, Beacon Hill NA, Churches, Schools
 - Proposed Funding Sources: No cost

2.3.8 Increase funding for housing rehabilitation and new construction.

- Support applications for HOME funds.
- Support efforts to increase HOME funding amounts to address increasing costs for property acquisition and repair.
- Encourage private investment in the area's housing.
- Develop incentives to encourage low and middle-income homeowners to complete home improvement projects.
- Develop targeted incentives to stimulate housing repair.
 - Potential target areas can be identified through the housing condition information collected in the neighborhood survey (see Appendix I). One potential target

Midtown Neighborhoods Plan

- area could be near the intersection of Blanco and Woodlawn
 - Consider developing a Model Block program where COSA general fund dollars (not income restricted) are made available to provide home improvement loans or grants in a two-to-three block area.
 - Target incentives to vacant, neglected or deteriorated homes.
- Investigate developing a revolving loan fund for housing rehabilitation.
 - Potential to create a community reinvestment program where residents pool their dollars to buy homes and fix the houses for resale.
 - Timeline: Short (Ongoing)
 - Lead Partners: UU Housing, Alta Vista NA, Beacon Hill NA
 - Proposed Partnerships: COSA Housing & Community Development Dept., City Manager's Office, Private Lenders, Homeowners
 - Proposed Funding Sources: HOME

2.3.9 Identify private sector sources of funding for housing rehabilitation and new construction.

- Encourage banks to offer low interest loan programs for rehabilitation and home repair. For example, Broadway National Bank offers a 6.7 % loan available for home repairs.
- Educate area homeowners about reverse mortgages and other funding options.
 - Timeline: Short (Ongoing)
 - Lead Partners: UU Housing
 - Proposed Partnerships: Alta Vista, Beacon Hill NAs
 - Proposed Funding Sources: Lending Institutions

2.3.10 Develop programs to assist the elderly, low-income, and moderate-income people in maintaining and restoring their homes.

- Address common elderly concerns about losing their home due to the cost of home repairs.
 - Timeline: Short (Ongoing)
 - Lead Partners: Fannie Mae
 - Proposed Partnerships: Citywide effort with mortgage companies, NAs
 - Proposed Funding Sources: Local / national funds for lending pool

2.3.11 Encourage the City to utilize the recently passed legislation that allows the City to attach liens to the property owner rather than the property and then sell the property. This action step is consistent with the CRAG 2000 Recommendations.

- Timeline: Short (Ongoing)
- Lead Partners: UU Housing, Alta Vista NA, Beacon Hill NA
- Proposed Partnerships: COSA Asset Management Dept., CMO, San Antonio Housing Trust, Bexar County, Law firms
- Proposed Funding Sources: No cost

2.3.12 Investigate ways to assist small non-profit housing providers, like UU Housing, in establishing clear title to potential properties for acquisition.

- Timeline: Short (Ongoing)
- Lead Partners: City Manager's Office
- Proposed Partnerships: Title Companies, SA Housing Trust, COSA Asset Management Dept.
- Proposed Funding Sources: To be determined



Midtown Neighborhoods Plan

Land Use Plan

The Land Use Plan identifies the preferred land development pattern for the Midtown Neighborhoods. The location of different land uses is based on existing land uses, community discussions and policies from the City's Master Plan. The Land Use Plan indicates how vacant and occupied parcels should be developed in the future. Each land use classification is described in the following table.

After City Council approval of the Midtown Neighborhoods Plan, the Planning Department will consult the Land Use Plan as a guide for developing staff recommendations on individual zoning cases.

Land Use Classifications Description

Low-Density Residential



Low-Density Residential uses include single-family houses on individual lots. Low-Density Residential uses also can include a limited number of duplexes and granny flats or garage apartments. For example, a single-family house with a garage apartment is allowed under this category. A duplex also is acceptable. However, a duplex and a granny flat on one lot is not considered to be a Low-Density Residential use.



One of the neighborhoods' highest priorities is to conserve the existing housing stock. The neighborhoods also recognize and appreciate the varying densities found in their residential areas. In recognition of the varying residential densities, the neighborhoods would like to see the structures built as multi-family housing continue in this use, even when located within a Low-Density Residential area. However, if a structure was built as a single-family house and currently is used as a multi-family structure, the neighborhoods' highest preference is for the house to return to single-family use when located within the Low-Density Residential classification. If returning the structure to a single-family use is infeasible, the neighborhoods would support a reduction in density. For example, if a property owner finds it infeasible to convert a four-unit structure into a single-family dwelling, the neighborhood would support reducing the density to a duplex.

Medium-Density Residential



Medium-Density Residential uses include three-and four-unit family dwellings and townhouses. Low-Density Residential uses also can be found within this classification.

In areas identified as Medium-Density Residential, the neighborhoods support additional density in the larger structures while conserving the existing housing stock and maintaining the buildings' architectural character. For example, maintaining one doorway on the primary façade would be one way of maintaining the architectural character of a building.

High-Density Residential



High-Density Residential uses include apartments with five or greater units. Medium and Low-Density Residential uses also can be found within this classification.

In areas identified as allowing High-Density Residential uses (see Mixed-Use, Mixed-Use Nodes, and Transit-Oriented Development Nodes), the neighborhoods support additional density in the larger structures while conserving the existing housing stock and maintaining the buildings' architectural character. For example, maintaining one doorway on the primary façade would be one way of maintaining the architectural character of an existing building.

Neighborhood Commercial



Neighborhood Commercial includes low-impact convenience retail or service uses, generally serving the neighborhood area, as well as Medium-Density Residential uses. Retail uses could include gift shops, delis, beauty parlors, antique stores, small neighborhood groceries or markets, restaurants that serve alcohol, coffee shops, and live/work units. Service uses could include shoe repair shops, dry cleaners and doctors offices. Residential uses include multi-family housing such as duplexes, three-to-four-unit family dwellings, small apartments or townhouses.

The neighborhoods encourage the use or adaptive use of existing commercial or residential structures in areas identified for Neighborhood Commercial development while maintaining the buildings' architectural character. For example, a single-family house in the Neighborhood Commercial area could be adapted into a coffee shop while maintaining the house's architectural features. Businesses are encouraged to utilize on-street parking and/or parking in the rear of the establishment. The neighborhoods also encourage mixed-use buildings where the first floor is used for retail or service businesses and the second/upper floor(s) is used for residences.

Midtown Neighborhoods Plan

Mixed-Use

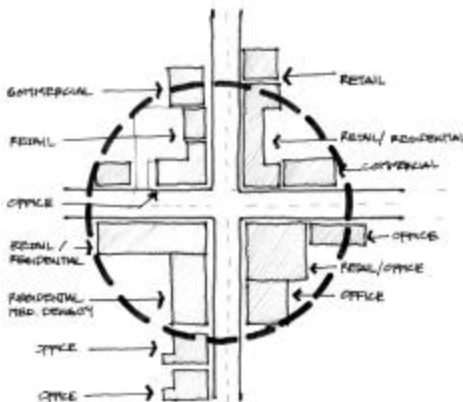


This classification includes a mix of land uses such as Neighborhood Commercial, Medium-Density Residential, and High-Density Residential. Commercial development, potentially at a higher intensity than found in the Neighborhood Commercial classification, would be the most common land use. This classification calls for the development of design guidelines to encourage safe, attractive and pedestrian-friendly environments, pedestrian linkages to surrounding areas, and options for easy travel by foot, bike or transit.



The neighborhoods support the use or adaptive use of existing commercial or residential areas identified for Mixed-Use development while maintaining the buildings' architectural character. Businesses are encouraged to utilize on-street parking and/or parking in the rear of the establishment. The neighborhoods also encourage mixed-use buildings where the first floor is used for retail or service businesses and the second/upper floor(s) is used for residences.

Mixed-Use Node



The Mixed-Use Node includes all of the uses mentioned in the Mixed-Use category. The Nodes should have a higher density of commercial and retail uses than the Mixed-Use category. The Mixed-Use Node should serve as a center of activity.

The neighborhoods support the use or adaptive use of existing commercial or residential structures in areas identified for Mixed-Use Nodal development while maintaining the buildings' architectural character. Businesses are encouraged to utilize on-street parking and/or parking in the rear of the establishment. The neighborhoods also encourage mixed-use buildings where the first floor is used for retail or service businesses and the second/upper floor(s) is used for residences.

Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Node



Transit-Oriented Development includes higher density and higher intensity land uses located within a focused distance of a transit stop. TOD includes the mix of uses described in the Mixed-Use Node classification, including commercial, retail, residential and civic uses at a higher density. The uses should be most intense, dense and concentrated at the transit stop or the center of the node. Uses should decrease in density as you travel towards the edge of the node. The edge of the node should include development, such as townhouses, which buffer the adjacent land uses. Transit-Oriented Development also includes urban design guidelines to encourage safe, attractive and pedestrian-friendly environments, pedestrian linkages to surrounding areas, and options for easy travel by foot, bike or transit.

Midtown Neighborhoods Plan

Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Node *(continued)*



The neighborhoods support the use or adaptive use of existing commercial or residential structures in areas identified for Transit-Oriented Development while maintaining the buildings' architectural character. However, in order to encourage a more intense development pattern in the TOD Nodes, the neighborhoods are willing to consider moving existing residential structures out of the Node and into the Low-Density Residential, Medium-Density Residential, Neighborhood Commercial or Mixed-Use areas. The neighborhoods would like to retain the existing commercial buildings in their current location.

A maximum number of parking spaces should be defined for the TOD Nodes. Incentives should be developed to encourage a reduced number of parking spaces and the development of mixed-use parking structures with active first floors rather than surface parking lots. Examples of mixed-use parking structures include retail businesses on the first floor and parking above or apartment buildings where the parking is located in the interior of the building and the housing units are located on the exterior. Consider allowing as few as zero parking spaces if light rail is developed. Encourage businesses to develop shared parking strategies.

A maximum setback or build-to line should be developed for the TOD Nodes. The neighborhoods also encourage mixed-use buildings where the first floor is used for retail or service businesses and the second/upper floor(s) is used for residences.

If light rail is funded, the neighborhoods anticipate a larger and more intense development node. Without the funding of light rail, the neighborhoods continue to anticipate transit-oriented development related to the existing bus services. Because fewer persons will ride the bus as compared to the number of passengers anticipated with light rail, the neighborhood anticipates the development of a smaller and less intense node related to the existing bus service.

Light Industrial	Light Industrial areas include general manufacturing, wholesaling, warehousing, and research and development uses. Light Industrial uses are encouraged to provide buffering or screening to differing adjacent uses.
Public/Institutional	Public, quasi-public and institutional uses, such as schools.
Parks/Open Space	Parks, recreational lands or open spaces that are identified for active use or passive enjoyment.

Midtown Neighborhoods Plan

Land Use Concepts

Low-Density Residential uses are found throughout the community. Medium-Density Residential uses are found along arterials or streets that carry the majority of the neighborhoods' traffic. The neighborhoods place a strong emphasis on conserving the existing housing stock.

Neighborhood Commercial, Mixed-use and Mixed-Use Nodes also are found along the neighborhoods' arterials. Transit-Oriented Development Nodes are located at the San Pedro/Hildebrand/railroad tracks and the Fredericksburg Road/railroad tracks intersections. Some of the neighborhoods' commercial centers are described in further detail below.

- Ashby/Flores area (near San Pedro Park) – Promote preservation, restoration and, potentially, adaptive use of the shotgun houses found in the area. Encourage low density commercial uses, medium-to-high-density residential uses, restaurants and coffee shops.
- Blanco (between Summit to Hildebrand) – Develop as a mixed-use commercial center. Discourage stand alone bars. Encourage lower density and less intense commercial uses south of Agnes Cotton ES such as coffee shops located in the existing residential structures. Identify land for the development of a plaza near Agnes Cotton ES to serve as a community gathering center.
- Fredericksburg Road – Develop as a mixed-use commercial center. Landscape and enhance the area's pocket parks as gathering spaces for customers and residents. Revitalize and restore the area's existing commercial structures.
- San Pedro (north of San Pedro Park and south of Mark Twain MS) – Develop as a mixed-use commercial center with an emphasis on office uses. Discourage stand alone bars.
- Hildebrand – Develop as an antiques and arts district. Use banners or flags to identify antiques or arts merchants. Encourage unique landscaping and lighting.
- Bed & Breakfasts – Bed & Breakfasts are an appropriate use in any of the land use categories as long as the business 1) does not negatively impact the architectural integrity of the home, 2) develops provisions to ensure that if the business fails, the housing unit will revert to a lower density use, 3) provides adequate on-site parking, and 4) operates under a zoning category which is compatible with surrounding properties.

Midtown Neighborhoods Plan